IMPLEMENTATION OF SECTION 1557 IN HEALTH CARE ORGANIZATIONS: THE DEVELOPMENT OF DISABILITY ACCESSIBILITY PROGRAMS AND POSITIONS

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**BACKGROUND**

- Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) prohibits health care organizations (HCOs) from discrimination based on disability
- HCOs with 15 or more employees are mandated to have a designated employee oversee
- Study Objective: Understand how HCOs have implemented this new role

**METHODS**

- Interviews with individuals (n=18) leading disability accessibility at community and academic HCOs.
- HCOs ranging in size from one hospital to a system with 40 hospitals.

**FINDINGS**

- Participants held diverse job titles including: ADA Coordinator, Section 1557 Coordinator, and Interpretive Services Coordinator
- Participants held diverse job responsibilities
- Despite variation, participants reported similar goals of their position:
  1. Adherence to legal requirements
  2. Development of an organizational culture that prioritizes equal access to health care for patients with disability

**Common Activities within Position**

- Documenting and tracking patients’ disability status and requested accommodations
- Responding to patient complaints
- Implementing trainings and serving as a resource for staff and providers
- Ensuring facilities and equipment are physically accessible
- Developing effective communication policies and procedures

**Challenges within Position**

- Lack of definition of role, with basic instruction of protecting the organization from potential lawsuits
- Expected duties within the roles often far exceeded capacity
- Necessary components to successful disability accessibility program that are not always offered:
  1. Adequate leadership support
  2. Dedicated budget
  3. Sufficient personnel
  4. Supportive organizational culture

**BACKGROUND**

- I feel like I wear so many hats that, sometimes, that does get put at the bottom of my to-do list. I wish I could be more available for people. The clinics don't always have the time either.

**CONCLUSION**

For many HCO’s, Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act was the impetus for developing a formal disability accessibility program and dedicated position. While an important first step, broad variability still exists in how the position is conceptualized and significant barriers stagnate successful implementation.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE**

Additional policy direction and recommendations are needed to inform the implementation of disability accessibility programs that meet the requirements of the law, but also the purpose of the law: the provision of accessible, equitable health care to all patients with disability.